

individuals, and frequently undergoes alterations in the same person, places also a number of organs beyond the reach of accurate observation.

The author contends, that for aught we know the brain is a unit, and the whole organ is concerned in each and every operation of the mind, and that persons are not to be considered powerful in intellect by the volume of the brain, but by its organization and activity. Persons have been known to lose considerable portions of the brain, even to the improvement of their minds. And during certain states of disease, men of ordinary intellect will sometimes present extraordinary manifestations; yet in these cases there is no augmentation in the size of the head, there is no addition of any new organ.

If the brain was composed of the different organs, as mapped out by phrenologists, the annals of surgery would afford, it is supposed, some well-authenticated cases, in the various mutilations of the brain, where the function of some one organ has been suspended, and the faculty destroyed corresponding to the organ which received the injury, while the others have remained unimpaired. W.

ABSCESS OF THE LIVER—OPERATION—RECOVERY.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

MR. H., aged 60, of intemperate habits, had been laboring under chronic hepatitis some years, attended with occasional attacks of dropsy. He was again attacked with the latter disease near the middle of February, 1836. The dropsical effusion seemed greatest in the abdominal cavity, which was enormously distended. Calomel purgatives were prescribed, followed by the infusion of digitalis in large doses. The latter remedy operated efficiently as a diuretic, and the abdominal swelling rapidly diminished. After the general intumescence had subsided, the right hypochondrium appeared unusually full and tender; tongue coated; obstinate constipation; slight rigors. Ordered a blister to be applied to the side, and calomel in alterative doses.

Notwithstanding these, with other remedies, were used, the disease steadily progressed—the swelling became more circumscribed, pointed and painful, attended with an obscure feeling of fluctuation. An incision was now made through the integuments into the cavity of the abscess. Nearly a gallon of sero-purulent fluid was discharged; that last discharged having all the sensible properties of bile. A severe rigor followed the operation, but soon passed off. The swelling immediately subsided. A broad band was carried around the body previous to the operation; this was gradually tightened, as the swelling diminished. The discharge, from the opening, continued a few days, and then ceased. Considerable constitutional irritation existed during the first week after the operation; this yielded to wine and quinine in moderately large doses. The patient, on his recovery, wholly abandoned the use of stimulants, and is now, Aug. 16th, in better health than he has been before for many years.

Taking into consideration the shock the system sustained by the

evacuation of so large a quantity of matter, I consider the exhibition of the wine and quinine during the period of constitutional derangement that followed, to have been a "sine qua non" to the recovery of the patient. The wine was given freely during the stage of depression, and had a decidedly beneficial effect. As this passed off, the amount given was gradually diminished, and it was wholly discontinued upon the closure of the external opening. The body band had also some influence on the favorable termination of the case, by compressing the parietes of the abscess, thus diminishing its capacity.

Hopkinton, N. H., Aug. 17th, 1837.

CHARLES A. SAVERY, M.D.

EMBRYOTIC INFLUENCES.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—With my annual subscription for the Journal, I send you a few remarks on "embryotic influences"—a subject that has found its way into your paper from the pen of Dr. Fish, followed by a criticism from Dr. Goulding. It is a subject of no great practical utility, but as a matter of curiosity is not void of interest; and perhaps its discussion may elicit, from some abler pen than mine, contributions of real importance to physiological science.

I have been much pleased with the communications from the combatants already in the field, on this subject, but should have been more so, had they manifested a temper and spirit more becoming sincere inquirers after truth. Irony and ridicule are powerful weapons with which to oppose an adversary, but very seldom elicit truth or promote the cause of science. Dr. G. offers one argument, and one only, against any baneful maternal influence upon the fœtus "in utero," viz. that no nervous connection exists between them, and consequently all the notions in our world in relation to this subject are better adapted to the dark ages, being founded in superstition and error. This mode of reasoning would better have answered the purpose of the writer, were he able to account for every phenomenon of nature on philosophical principles. But while common candor must compel him to admit that very many facts exist, without being thus explainable, it seems rather ungenerous to tax Dr. Fish so heavily on the score of his credulity. Nature, in all her operations, is guided by systematic and uniform laws, but still the connection between cause and effect is not always perceptible; or if the human mind is capable of comprehending and explaining this connection, it may not as yet be understood. Science is progressive, and many points are yet in darkness which we hope are destined to be illuminated by a meridian sun. And, further, there are "lusus naturæ," or events out of the ordinary course of nature, which are nevertheless dependent upon causes, though obscure and unintelligible.

The deleterious effect of this doctrine upon the *maternal* class of society, appears to me exaggerated by Dr. G., and made to assume a